

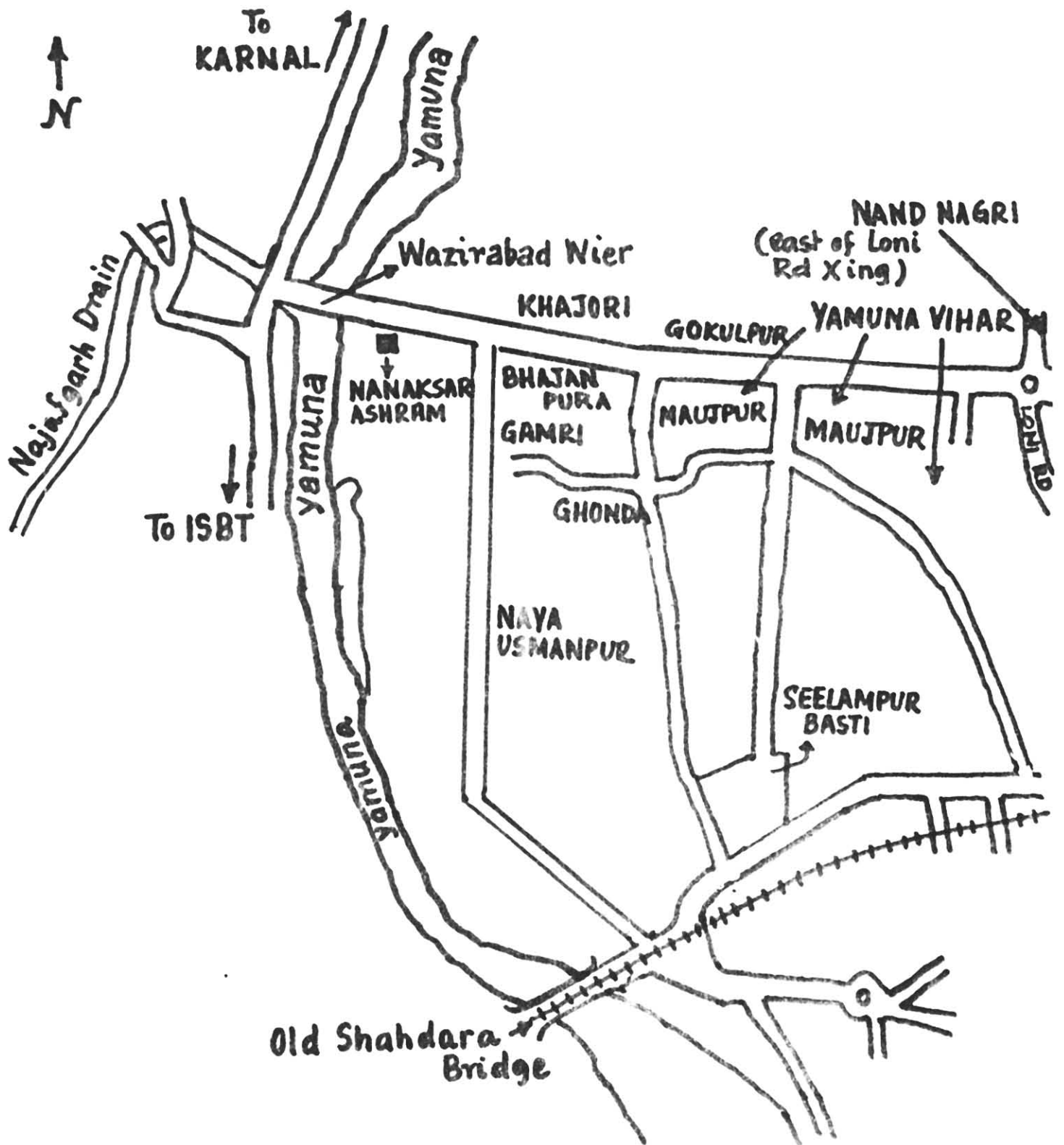
THE TRANS-YAMUNA CARNAGE : A REPORT FROM NANAKSAR ASHRAM

On the morning of 31st October, 1984, Indira Gandhi was gunned down by a couple of Sikh assassins inspired by extremist feelings. By the time night shrouded Delhi's Trans-Yamuna area, a large group of thugs and hoodlums, mostly under the banner of convenience of the Congress (I), had got together in their respective localities to prepare for extracting grisly retribution from the Sikh populace that lived on the left bank of the river. From 1st to 3rd November Hood of thousands of innocents smeared the dirty, dusty roads across the Yamuna and the air was filled with agonised cries, with the sickly sweet stench of burning human flesh and the dust thrown up by Sikhs who ran helter skelter from mobs that came to kill, burn, loot and destroy. In the mornings, vultures had field days.

This is not a report of what happened over the entire trans-Yamuna area. Nor has it been written by a journalist. It is simply a record of the mayhem and carnage experienced and suffered by no less than 3,500 human beings who escaped from the horrors of their locality to take shelter in an entirely apolitical Sikh Ashram from the evening of 3rd November. More than two score volunteers of the Nagarik Ekta Manch have worked with these people in the Ashram for nearly a fortnight and they have both felt and seen the horror, the emptiness, the terror and the tragedy of death on the faces of those who took refuge. To keep such an experience within oneself and not to share it with many others who have not been exposed to it would be tantamount to a criminal suppression of facts. A ver large and disturbingly vocal cross-section of people in Delhi and, indeed elsewhere, have described the violence as a natural upshot of what has happened in the Punjab in the last couple of years; the general sentiment seems to be that the Sikhs have got their 'come-uppance' and is violence unnatural when crackers are burst and sweets distributed at the death of the Prime Minister? If such things were done, they were acts of gross vulgarity but if one were to burn people for vulgarity, one doubts how many of us in India could remain alive. No act of vulgarity and no amount of barbarism in the Punjab can justify a sixty year old, god fearing man into a blazing human torch. It matters little whether the killed, the burned, the beaten to death wore their hair or short; whether they kept beards or were clean shaven; whether they worshipped in temples or in gurudwaras. They were simply people, innocent people, whose houses were looted, vandalised and put to flames, whose menfolk were humiliated and then burnt alive and whose womenfolk were either raped or thrown to the streets by mobs that had long since lost their last semblance of minimal sanity. This is a story of these people.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Nanaksar Ashram is a sleepy idyllic little place a furlong away from the Wazirabad Wier that crosses the Yamuna a little ahead of the Timarpur bypass, some 5-6 kilometres north of the Inter-State Bus Terminus. Shrouded by eucalyptus trees and well off the main road, a visitor could easily pass the ashram by. In normal circumstances,



the ashram caters to purely spiritual needs - kirtans, paths and discussions on the Holy Scripture; it chose to remain sway from politics to the extent that newspapers were (and are still) not allowed in the premises. From the evening of 3rd November, 1984, it got transformed into a massive refugee camp. Into its compound flowed Sikh refugees from Nand Nagari, Yamuna Vihar, Bhajanpura, Khajori Colony, Gamri, Maujpur and parts of Ghonds - people who fled for their lives leaving behind their smouldering dead and their burnt out houses. Volunteers from the Nagarik Ekta Manch managed to piece together information from no less than 2,000 of the 3,500 refugees to reconstruct the story of the violence that erupted in these areas from the night of 31st October.

It is now beyond a trace of doubt - for it matches with the reports from all other trans-Yamuna relief camps that much of the violence and havoc wreaked upon the Sikh populace residing across the river was pre-planned and pre-meditated. This is not to deny the element of spontaneity. What needs to be stressed from the very outset is that the violence was much less spontaneous and a great deal more preplanned than what most people believe. To say that the mayhem in the trans-Yamuna area was entirely the handiwork of lumpen elements - who had spontaneously ignited at the news of Mrs. Gandhi's murder - is a violent and callous transgression of truth. And the persistence of such untruths will only aid in shielding the real culprits and butchers from the eyes of law.

As mentioned earlier, this is a reconstruction from the evidence of people who lived in only a tiny segment of the entire trans-Yamuna area. Though the story is specific to Bhajanpura, Nand Nagari, Gamri, Khajori Colony, Maujpur and Yamuna Vihar, there are commonalities with other parts of trans-Yamuna as well. What happened was, more or less, as follows:

1. On 31st evening, local level mohalla leaders - almost universally Congress (I) qua-hoodlums - called meetings in their respective areas to chalk out plans for extracting vengeance from the following morning. In the Khajori-Bhajanpura (C Block) Gamri area (a geographically contiguous belt) the mastermind was one Kadam Singh, a Gujjar by caste, who is the Chairman of the Khajori Village Panchayat and very much a Congress(I) roughneck. According to several accounts, all painstakingly corroborated and cross-checked by the Nagarik Ekta Manch, Kadam Singh called a meeting in Khajori Village on 31st night. Here he made groups of 10 or more people each for supervising destruction that was planned for during the following days. The focus is on Kadam Singh not for the want of other names but because his actions typify the role of local level, politically affiliated thugs in period 31st October to November 3rd.

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After the meeting, Kadam Singh aided by his son Ajit - 'Rationwalla' and one of his henchmen, Jai Singh a Bhari kerosene depot operator who has a shop in the Khajori Colony market, made an exhaustive list of local Sikh families who were culled out for the arson, looting and murder that ensued from mid-morning of November 1st. In the process of list making, these three were ably assisted by Rajbir Singh, the principal of Bhajanpura's Jan Kalyan Vidyalaya, who brought out his school register for identifying Sikh households.

Throughout the trans-Yamuna area, and in the catchment area that accounted for refugees in Nanaksar in particular, the role of three types of people in identifying Sikh households, mobilising hoodlums for mayhem and supplying fuel for arson stands out very sharply. These were:

- a) Local level Congress (I) politicians and hoodlums at different hierarchical levels. Among these were
1. Kadam Singh, resident of Khajori village
 2. Ajit, rationwalla, son of Kadam Singh
 3. Jai Singh, kerosene depot operator of the Khajori Colony market
 4. Girish, kerosene depot operator in Gamri
 5. Kuldeep, kerosene depot operator in Jagjit Ngr.
 6. Sajan Singh, kerosene depot operator from A Block, Gamri
 7. Jeet Singh, a Gujjar, owner of Jeet Property Dealers near the Bhajanpura main bus stop.
 8. The owner of Jain Sringer Sadan, aged 40-45 a close associate of Kadam Singh
 9. Munshi, age 60-65 years, Congress (I) locality leader in Usmanpur.
 10. Babulal Sharma, Congress (I) hoodlum residing in Ghonda colony
 11. 'Tau' a Gujjar milkman cum moneylender and associate of Kadam Singh, age 60-65 years, Congress (I) affiliation and residing in A 48 Khajori Colony
 12. Premchand (s/o Kunwar Sain) age 20-22 years of Gali no. 4, Vijay Park, Maujpur.
 13. Singhal, age 45-50 years, of Gali no. 13, C Block Bhajanpura
 14. Shyamlal Yadav, ex police officer now of the Congress (I) and dealer in opium and hasish resident of Khajori Colony
 15. Rajbir Singh, Congress (I) sympathies, follower of Kadam Singh, Principal of Jan Kalyan Vidyalaya Bhajanpura.

b) Ration shop and kerosene depot owners as identifiers.

Some of the names are given in 2 and 6 above. These people have invariably been members of the same party or closely linked to local Congress (I) politicians according to the victims from the same area.

c) Kerosene depot operators as suppliers of fuel for arson.

It is beyond a trace of doubt that kerosene depot operators were the dominant suppliers of fuel for the subsequent burning of homes and people. Several sources, jointly and individually, have pointed to Jai Singh, Girish, Kuldeep and Sajan Singh of 3 to 6 above as the ones who supplied kerosene by the bucketful on the 1st and 2nd of November. Further it was strongly alleged that Jai Singh, under orders of Kadam Singh, also supplied phosphorus (safed cheez) in the buckets of kerosene to aid the process of arson. There are very good reasons for believing that phosphorus was supplied. None of the witnesses spoke of the safed cheez being hand held, everyone said that it was in kerosene buckets and seen only when the kerosene was spilled on to floors.

2. On the morning of 1st November, and in some areas, even on 2nd November two people Kadam Singh and 'Tunda' Jain the owner of Jain Srinagar Sadan which stands in the Bhajanpura Main Market, went from door to door of Sikh houses in Khajori Colony, Gamri and Bhajanpura marking them thus: X, S, X, (X). In a manner reminiscent of Nazi Germany, the houses were thereby marked for arson, looting, and murder that followed within a couple of hours. Through the days of the 1st to the 3rd, kerosene was only supplied directly from depots but Jai Singh, Girish, Kuldeep and Sajan Singh also went with mobs, carrying tins of kerosene in rickshaw carts. Who paid for such a wide distribution of kerosene remains a question for it is difficult to believe that precious hoarded stock would be altruistically and freely distributed for arson. It is also worth noting that the violence occurred on the first three days of November - a time when depots are fully stocked up for distribution during the first fortnight of the month.
3. Having drawn up the list and marked the houses, all that was needed to incite the mob was to play upon Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and spread rumours about wild Sikh jubilation. As far as it can be ascertained, all reports of the Sikhs in the particular area dancing bhangras and distributing mithai were based on hearsay evidence; even if some of these reports have any substance, they certainly cannot justify the horrible and brutal carnage that ensued. Another piece of news

that was made political capital of, and served to trigger off the mob, was the utterly insane statement made by the head priest in Amritsar which was prominently displayed in the newspapers. Kadam Singh certainly made fiery speeches over loudspeakers and his final exhortation always was 'Jaagte raho, Lootte raho, marte raho'.

4. What happened thereafter was sheer, unspeakable horror. In a space of two and a half days, among the families who took refuge in Nanaksar, 155 people have been slaughtered. These numbers, which are but from a single camp that gave refuge to a small neighbouring populace, make mockery of the Government's estimates of the deaths in the capital. 45% of those killed were from Nand Nagari, most of whom were from Block A/3 - the Punjabi Mohalla and Block E. Gamri and Bhajanpura - mostly C Block - accounted for another 30%. The dead left behind them 107 widows, 72% from the ages 20-45 years. Not surprisingly, Nand Nagari accounted for 40% of the widows while Gamri and Bhajanpura claimed another 31%.
5. How did they die? The vast majority of them were finally burnt but not, as a six year old girl by being trapped in a blazing house. They were first dragged out, then beaten to an inch of their lives, their beard and hair was shorn, they were rolled in gutters and then, when almost unconscious, either thrown to the flames or burnt by first dousing kersone and then igniting limb by limb. All this was done in the presence of the womenfolk and children under 10. When they attempted to rescue their relatives, they were beaten. Some were raped. In atleast one instance, after killing the men, the mob gang raped a young girl and then stuck an iron rod up her vagina. She is still under a semi catatonic trance.
6. Who killed, burnt, raped and looted? There were many: ones who actively aided killing by identifying or pointing out sardar's homes to the mob. Their names have already been given. Others who throw out Sikhs who hid in their houses in terror. Two names stand out here:
 1. The Officer on Duty in the Nand Nagari Police Station, who at 2 p.m. on November 1, threw out a widow and her family wanting to seek shelter;
 2. Dharampal age around 45, resident of 474/4 Vijay Park, Gali no. 1 Maujpur who not only turned in a Sikh family to the mob but also directed the mob to a nearby factory where three Sikh boys were hiding. Two were burnt to death.

It has also been alleged that Dr. Jagdish Chander Gupta, a dentist practicing at Maujpur Chowk threw out a Sikh family to the mob, which resulted in the killing of the only male adult. However this is the only uncorroborated report in this article. Those who personally looted, burnt and killed were manifold. With the police being inactive to say the least and actively enthusiastically more often than not, the temptations of quenching one's blood lust and looting a TV to boot, were too great to ignore. The following names stand out, for they have been mentioned by several refugees jointly as well as individually:

1. Banta, age 22 years, general crook and thumpen element of Vijay Mohalla, Maujpur.
2. Bhajan Lal and Lallu of Gali no. 7, Brijpuri, burnt the house of the Sikh resident of D 121 Gali no. 7, Brijpuri
3. Bhism, age 24-25 years and Ajit Choudhury age 20-22 Congress (I) youth leaders who led mobs and burnt houses
4. Chamanlal resident of Khajori Village, arsonist in Khajori and Gamri
5. Bishamdhari Dayal, stays near the brick shop in Gamri, seen thrashing Sikhs
6. Dharampal, mentioned earlier, who other than identifying and leading a mob to the factory also participated in burning one of the two Sikh boys killed. Looted extensively:
7. Jaina Gujjar, probably the most vicious of the killers. A general hoodlum of the Gamri, Bhajanpura and Khajori area and a close associate of Kadam Singh. Lives in Gamri village in a house in front of a pond reportedly always carries a revolver and works as a store keeper in the Shandara Mental Hospital. Not only planned but very actively participated in the killings and looting in Gamri and in C block Bhajanpura
8. Khemu Gujjar, resident of Gamri village, looter and arsonist;
9. Gujjar Doodhwalla, who supplied milk to Janata Flat no. 1142 Nand Nagari and personally killed the Sikh male in the flat; the widow delivered a child within a few hours of her husband's death and did not lactate for several days;
10. Parthu Gujjar, age 40-45 years, of Gamri village, looter and killer
11. Jaggi, of Gamri main market, looter, killer and arsonist;
12. Tunda Jain, mentioned earlier, who in addition to marking Sikh houses also participated in arson
13. Jamadar, father and son, resident of a double storied house in Gamri, (they rear pigs),

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- looters, killers and arsonists in Gamri;
14. Kesar Singh, alias Kusri, a Gujjar who owns - buffaloes and a small dairy in Khajori colony, looter, killer and arsonist
 15. Laxman, age 30-35 years, driver of a three wheeler and stays in the house of Jeet Singh Gujjar, main road, Gamri who looted and Killed.
 16. Nannu, brickmaker and seller, resident of Gali no. 7, Khajori Colony, personally killed the Sikh resident of 1031/251 Khajori Colony.
 17. A nurse and her two nephews, of flat no. 1006, Janata flats, Nand Nagari. She incited her nephews to kill the male resident of flat 1018 and looted the house with them;
 18. Om Prakash, labourer, resides in Gali no. 7, Khajori Colony, killer
 19. Parsuram, nephew of Kadam Singh, arsonist
 20. Purshottam and Rajinder, sons of Jamuna Devi of A 3/75 Nand Nagari, Punjabi Mohalla. The sons killed and burnt houses while the mother with her daughters and daughter in laws participated in the loot;
 21. Rajinder Kumar, age 21 student with Congress (I) affiliation, arsonist and seen burning wit two Sikhs.
 22. Ramesh Mistry, D/1 Nand Nagari, Killer
 23. Shyamal, A-3/23 Nand Nagari, killer
 24. Ratan Singh, stays near C 437 Bhajanpura, Gujjar and DTC workers, looter, arsonist and killer
 25. Ramesh Thakur, age 25-30 years, participated in killing residents of E 335 Usmanpuri; earlier tenant at that house.

It needs to be stated that this is by no means an exhaustive list of those who looted, burnt houses and killed merely an indicative one that scratches the surface of the violence. The list is corroborated and for most people, the Nagarik Ekta Manch have proper affidavits. The names have not been given for the sake of creating an impact. Instead, the list has been partly revealed out of a firm conviction that the State, if it is to exist at all, must bring such criminals and killers to the courts of law. In this process, one must not only indicate the magnitude of the crime but the criminals involved in such brutality. It needs to be stressed that after the riots, most of us have lost faith in either the ability or the desire of normal law enforcing authorities to bring such people to the courts. Nevertheless, the State is the only machinery that one can turn to if one does not want the country to indulge in a series of personal vendetta.

Where were the police? It is by now clear to all and sundry that the police were nowhere to be seen protecting people during these three days. True, there were instances to the contrary but they were conspicuous in their rarity. The general belief is that police were passive spectators and not active rioters. Nothing can be farther from the truth. In the first instance, the mere act of policemen being passive spectators constitutes an active enough encouragement. The word that was spread throughout Nand Nagari, Khajori, Bhajanpura, Gamri and Maujpur was that the police have given the mob a free hand - a sentiment that was real for the men in khaki were indeed absent. More seriously, however, there are atleast five instances in the area where police were actively involved either in inciting the mob or in the loot itself. Consider the following:

1. Ramesh, the officer of the Yamunapuri/Yamuna Vihar p.s. went to C Block, Yamuna Vihar at around 4 or 4.30 p.m. on November 2 and told the mob that it had the rest of the evening and the night to kill the remaining Sikhs;
2. The inspector of the Khajori police station who told the mobs early morning on 3rd morning that they had three days to kill the Sikhs but had still not completed the job.
3. On 1st November, four policemen on duty in Gamri told a large crowd at around 11 a.m. that they had two days to finish all the Sikhs or else the Sikhs would finish them.
4. When the army entered Vijay Park, Maujpur, looting was going on. In the mob, were three policemen from the Seelampur police station.
5. On the morning of 4th November, Ashok (No. 404 E) of the Yamuna Vihar police station took a group of four thugs to a house in Khajori colony. He broke open the lock on the pretext of searching for weapons and then allowed these hoodlums to loot the house.

The above reconstruction points to several things.

First a level of planning that was much more detailed than what people have originally believed.

Second that the violence was not done entirely by lumpen elements of the trans-Yamuna area. Third, there was a considerable hand of people affiliated to the Congress (I), atleast at the local level.

Fourth, the caste group that preplanned, incited and often participated in the violence in a manner bordering on the meticulous were the Gujjars, who have for long been hostile to the Sikh populace.

Fifth, because the frontliners were often the lumpens, there is a great deal of resentment about the bhangis.

Sixth, while in most cases roles changed - the informers also looted and the looters also killed - some managed to orchestrate things from a distance, e.g. Kadam Singh, Munshi and Rajbit Singh. And last but not least the mastermind of Nand Nagri, Smt. Jumna Devi of A 3/75 Nand Nagri ably assisted by her sons Pushottam and Rajinder. Finally the available data on arson and loot are as follows:

House completely or largely burnt : 136 (many do not know yet)
Houses looted : 166

THOSE WHO REMAIN - The Story in Nanaksar

At its peak, there were some 502 families that had taken refuge in Nanaksar, which translates to roughly 3000-3250 people. The volunteers of the Nagarik Ekta Manch have watched with growing admiration how the Swamiji of the Ashram, along with two people, Mr. Sharma and Kanwalsahib, and perhaps three dozen sevadars managed enormous langars and allocated sleeping area in a magnificent manner. After exchanging notes with other camp groups, it became clear that the Ashram had probably the most efficient internal organisation to distribute food and shelter. If the Manch volunteers have succeeded to any extent in Nanaksar, a very large part of the credit goes to the Ashram itself. Working there has been and will continue to be a pleasure.

As anywhere else, the most pathetic and pressing cases have been the 107 widows. One has to only meet Harbans Kaur (name changed), whose husband and four sons were killed, and see the tragedy etched along the wrinkles of her face. Or for that matter, two young widows, both under 25, each having a baby two weeks old without a single earner to feed them. Or the woman who was married four months ago or the lady who is heavy with a child who will never see his or her father. Or Amarjeet (name changed) a 15 year old girl who has been orphaned. One could give a list of all the widows, and their details but that itself would be a separate exercise. Two sets of facts are however of prime importance and must be shared with the reader.

-First, the 107 widows have merely 33 income earning supporters and against this, there are 207 dependents, excluding the widows themselves. In other words, each income earner must on an average support over ten mouths. In normal times, it would have been 5 or less.

-Second That 77% of these widows have no income earners at all and have excluding themselves, 177 dependents. Thus without any steady source of income they have to feed over three mouths on an average.

These two facts are worth remembering from the point of view of long term rehabilitation, especially since the amount given for death is paltry 10,000.

During the first four days the Manch was in Nanaksar, volunteers with the explicit permission of the Ashram organised the following:

- a) Taking messages to be sent to friends and relatives the transmitting was done by the Manch's central message group and they went through
- b) Doing the missing person's lists for tracking down on a centralised as well as a decentralised basis.
- c) Listing all families in a detailed format that was continuously updated as more people entered or as more information was available. In this, the volunteers were helped by the card system introduced by the Ashram, once the families were listed, this was recorded on the cards.
- d) After listing, the families were asked to get their clothes - according to family size and needs. The clothes were distributed in a separate but almost adjacent area. In this, widows and children under 15, elderly women and men, mothers with babes in arm got three times as much as others. However, all males got atleast two pairs of trousers or pyjamas, 2 pairs of shirts or kurtas, two pugrees, a sweater or a coat while women got two pairs of salwar kameez a shawl or sweater. Exchanges were freely done - as they should be.

Once the demand for clothes subsided, the volunteers started a new set of work, which began around Saturday or Sunday i.e. 10th or 11th November. This involved:

- a) Filling R-1 forms, one per claim, registering forms thus filled, returning the duplicate and
- b) taking the original to the Shahdara Court for registration. The Manch people were asked to help the D.M's office in expediting the registration.

- c) Once they were registered, the receipts were collected and returned to the head of families and entered.
- d) Writing FIRs, registering them at the respective police stations, collecting and returning the receipts.
- e) Writing R-2 loan forms itself an involved process where people are asked to evaluate the value of plant and machinery, land and building, stores, reserves and past profits;

In the meanwhile a group of volunteers devoted themselves exclusively to the widows and others who fear to return home or have no homes to return to. I think it can be said that the volunteers know every widow in Nanaksar by face and by name. The relationship that has developed and will continue to grow with these utterly unfortunate people is one in which we are, quite simply, friends, neither are the widows thought of as repositories of information nor do they think that the Manch volunteers are here to glean data out of them. In the course of the second week, in depth discussions have been carried out with each such person, typically by a person that the individual widow is more fond of, to assess their skills, the kind of work - they could possibly do, whether they want to return home or go elsewhere and in general, the kind of help they need other than friendship. Similar discussions have and are being done with others whose houses have been gutted or who do not have a place to return to.

From Friday, 16th November, two new sets of work presented themselves.

- a) Government officials have started arriving with the cheques and while the number of cheques distributed as of 20th November is less than 150- the procedures needed before a person can get the cheque are many - which needed volunteers. Simultaneously a group of workers had to keep on commuting between the Shahdara Court and Nanaksar assessing the number of cheques prepared and forms verified.
- b) Going to the areas and finding out the state of the Mohallas, the local tensions, whether people can be sent back, the extent of destruction and assessing how many cheques have been distributed in the areas themselves. As a matter of fact, hardly any cheques have been disbursed in the areas, simply because most claimants who passed the verification, those whose houses were gutted, who were injured and whose family members were killed - have not returned to their localities.

From the second week, two other things have been continuously carried out.

- a) Doing a detailed list of miscreants, some of whom have been mentioned here.
- b) Writing affidavits to be used in courts, an act that required a great deal of delicate handling but with the growing confidence of the people about the Manch's bonafides, several have been collected.

As of the third week, the focus has shifted from relief to rehabilitation, though volunteers are always present to handle aspects of relief work.

THOSE WHO REMAIN - The Problem of Rehabilitation

Compared to rehabilitation, the problem of relief pales into insignificance. There is the problem of fear, the problem of apprehension, the problem of memories, the problem of nowhere to go and no income to earn. The magnitude of the problem comes out in a single incident that occurred during the week starting Monday, November 5th. A young widow sneaked out of the camp and went to the Yamuna and attempted to commit suicide by drowning. That is essentially the mind that has to be aided in rehabilitation.

To begin with, almost every single widow refuses to return, and very justifiably so. This does not mean that most of them want to go to the Punjab. Many have been in Delhi for years on end and do not have close enough family ties or relations on whom they can make impositions in the Punjab. Widows are not the only ones reluctant to return to their areas. Those whose houses were gutted and saw the worst horrors of mob frenzy have no desire to relive them in their localities. In Khajori and in Gamri as well as C Block Shajanpura, people fear Kadam Singh, Jaina Gujjar, Kesri Jaggi, Tunda Jain, Khemu Gujjar and Ratan Singh, and wish to have no truck with them. In Nand Nagari, no one has returned to A 3 Punjabi Mohalla as of 19th November because, in nine cases out of ten, the houses that remain are merely burnt out facades.

If they do not want to return, where do they go to? It is clear that the amount disbursed by the Government can help in no way at all. For instance, if a person has escaped death and his house has been totally burnt, but with the roof not having caved in, all that he gets is Rs. 5,000 on State account. Even if he wants to return, this would not suffice for even wiring, cleaning and re-plastering the house. This is an

area where the relief funds organised by the newspapers and other private agencies can play a major role. The following suggestions might be of help:

1. The Manch plus other voluntary agencies make a consolidated list of those who do not want to return. Such lists are now available in many camps as well as for areas where no relief centres exist. In preparing these lists, people should be asked whether they have a specific area preference and more importantly, whether groups or them want to live together in, say, a block of flats or houses. The latter point has its problems : ghettoising people exposes them to, heavens forbid, possible future traumas and, at first sight, the idea of widows being given flats in the middle of nowhere seems rather inhuman. The point is that a decision on this should be taken quickly and jointly. Here it would be preferable if a common decision is taken under the aegis of the Manch, not for any other reason but because it has in its fold the largest number of volunteers with the widest cross section of opinions and politics.
2. With this list which really ought to be with the Manch by the end of November, meetings can be had with the Delhi Development Authority or similar bodies for immediate allocation of plots of land.
3. In the meanwhile, architects - even students of the School of Planning and Architecture - be requested to design low cost houses not very different from the ones where the families lived and were used to.
4. The relief funds of these private agencies can then be utilised to build these houses. Pressure may be put on the Government to supply cement and steel at concessional or levy rates. Individual cement companies may be approached for donation in kind.
5. Those who want to return to their mohallas need to be treated very differently as far as housing goes. Estimates have to quickly be made - and this can be done by the end of November or the first week of December of the extent of damage and rebuilding costs. The money so sanctioned can be used straightaway; if need be, the rebuilding can be supervised area wise by the volunteers of the Manch, if only to prevent contractors from fleecing the ones returning home.

Obviously the more serious problem is with the widows. In fact there would be two main problems, those of insecurity and income. Taking the second problem first, it is clear that with the pittance that they have got as the price of life and livelihood lost, the money will peter out in no time. As we have mentioned earlier, according to the Nanaksar experience alone, 77% of the widows have no earning members left and have to feed, on an average, some three mouths. In many places, the widows have indicated special skills, particularly sewing and knitting. It would be a good idea if the aid agencies and banks give loans at very concessional terms to set up such cooperatives - according to charters determined by the widows themselves - to purchase equipment. Thereafter either the Delhi Administration or the Government can supply them raw material and take the finished product, made according to market specifications, for which they be given conversion payments. The goods can be sold in Government emporia or through other marketing outlets.

As far as the wise, overwhelming problem of insecurity is concerned, the answer is both simply and complex. There can be no viable macro solutions to this problem. What it needs is a moral commitment of every single one of us who have worked with the Manch or otherwise to take the responsibility of 4 to 5 such widowed families for atleast the next half a decade. We will have to spend some part of our time per week with them wherever they are in Delhi and help them whenever they need assistance. This might mean getting them ration cards, arranging for death certificates, helping them to move in, helping the children with their homework, getting the aged one kerosene, getting people jobs, liaising with mohalla people on their behalf, going to their festivals, inviting them over for ours, arranging the daughter's wedding, advising them on financial matters, laughing with them, crying with them, drinking tea with them, playing with their kids, sharing our lives with them to a point when they see us coming down the crooked lane they know that here is a friend. Without this rehabilitation is word for drawing room conversation.

NAGARIK EKTA MANCH
VOLUNTEERS FROM THE NANAKSAR ASHRAM

November 20, 1984

We once again need to acknowledge the Swamiji of Nanaksar Ashram, Mr. Sharma, Kanwalsahab, the Sevadars and others who have helped in a thousand different ways.

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Also our thanks to the officers of the Punjab and Sind Bank who have come out of their way to make accounts for several widows in the Ashram itself - which has saved them a great deal of hardship.

Without the dedicated work of the PEACE volunteers of Mother Teresa, Vidya Jyoti, some Delhi University and School of Social Work groups, doctors from the All India Institute and elsewhere, the immediate relief work would not have been possible.

TABLE 3 : WIDOWS - NO. OF SUPPORTERS VERSUS NO. OF DEPENDENTS

AREA, LOCALITY	WIDOWS	SUPPORTERS	DEPENDENTS	$\frac{2+3+4}{3}$
1	2	3	4	
Nand Nagari	43	16	77	8.5
Jagjit Nagar	0	1	20	29.0
Gamri	22	2	43	33.5
Khajori	4	1	5	10.0
Bhajanpura	11	10	19	4.0
Ashok Nagar	3	-	11	-
Yamuna Vihar	6	1	10	17.0
Sunder Nagari	2	-	7	-
Vijay Park, Maujpur	2	1	2	5.0
Miscellaneous	6	1	13	20.0
T O T A L	107	33	207	10.5

NOTE: The last column gives the ratio of number of mouths to feed in an area to the number of potentially income earning people.

TABLE 4 : WIDOWS - THOSE WHO HAVE NO ONE FOR SUPPORT AND HAVE MOUTHS TO FEED

AREA, LOCALITY	WIDOWS WITHOUT EARNERS	DEPENDENTS	$\frac{\text{MOUTHS WIDOWS w/o EARN}}{\text{WIDOWS w/o EARN}}$
Nand Nagari	32(74%)	64	3.0
Jagjit Nagar	7(88%)	18	3.6
Gamri	20(91%)	43	3.2
Khajori	3(75%)	5	2.7
Ashok Nagar	3(100%)	11	4.7
Bhajanpura	4(36%)	8	3.0
Yamuna Vihar	5(83%)	10	3.0
Sunder Nagari	2(100%)	7	4.5
Vijay Park, Maujpur	1(50%)	2	3.0
Miscellaneous	5(33%)	9	2.8
T O T A L	82(77%)	177	3.2

NOTE: The last column gives the number of mouths each widow would have to feed on an average, without having any income earning capabilities.

APPENDIX

DATA ON REFUGEES AND WIDOWS OF NANAKSAR ASHRAM
COLLECTED BY THE NAGARIK EKTA MANCH

TABLE 1 : AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF WIDOWS (IN %)

AGE GROUP	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION
15-20	0.50
20-25	17.00
25-30	16.00
30-35	15.00
35-40	11.00
40-45	13.00
45-50	9.00
50-55	7.00
55-60	1.75
60-65	5.00
65-70	1.75
70 +	4.00
T O T A L	107(100.00%)

TABLE 2 : WIDOWS - WHERE THEY CAME FROM

AREA, LOCALITY	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION
Nand Nagari	40.0
Gamri	21.0
Bhajanpura	10.0
Jagjit Nagar	7.0
Yamuna Vihar	6.0
Khajori	4.0
Ashok Nagar	3.0
Sunder Nagari	1.5
Vijay Park, Maujpur	1.5
Miscellaneous	6.0
TOTAL	107(100%)